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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7719
INFO RUEHGT/AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA 7809
RUEHSJ/AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE 7798
RUEHSN/AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR 8041
RUEHTG/AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA 7797
RUEDEHA/USCINCSO QUARRY HTS PN
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BT
C O N F I D E N T I A L

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE MANAGUA 3768

EO 12356: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PROP SOPN NU

SUBJECT: ONE MONTH SUSPENSION FOR SATIRICAL WEEKLY

1. (U) SUMMARY: THE PRO-FSLN WEEKLY "LA SEMANA COMICA " DEVOTED ITS AUGUST 19 EDITION TO THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE INCIDENT IN WHICH MONSIGNOR BISMARCK CARBALLO WAS PARADED NUDE IN FRONT OF TELEVISION CAMERAS. THE GRN'S CENSORSHIP OFFICE SUBSEQUENTLY ORDERED "LA SEMANA COMICA" CLOSED FOR ONE MONTH FOR NOT HAVING SUBMITTED ITS MATERIAL FOR PRIOR REVIEW. THE SPANISH AMBASSADOR AND THE PAPAL NUNCIO BOTH SENT NOTES TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY PROTESTING THE PUBLICATION. THE INDEPENDENT DAILY LA PRENSA REFUSED TO PUBLISH ON AUGUST 23 WHEN THE CENSORSHIP OFFICE REFUSED TO LET THE NUNCIO'S PROTEST NOTE BE PRINTED. (END SUMMARY)
2. (U) THE PRO-FSLN TABLOID "LA SEMANA COMICA," A SATIRICAL JOURNAL PUBLISHED WEEKLY, DEVOTED ITS AUGUST 19 EDITION TO THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF "THE CARBALLO AFFAIR." (NOTE: IN AUGUST 1982, BISMARCK CARBALLO, THE DIRECTOR OF RADIO CATOLICA AND THE SPOKESMAN FOR ARCHBISHOP MIGUEL OBANDO Y BRAVO, WAS FORCED BY THE SANDINISTA POLICE TO PARADE NUDE BEFORE TELEVISION CAMERAS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS AFTER APPARENTLY HAVING BEEN SET UP BY STATE SECURITY (DGSE) IN AN ALLEGED LOVE AFFAIR.) "LA SEMANA COMICA" FILLED ITS TWELVE PAGES WITH OFF-COLOR ARTICLES AND CARTOONS, AND CONTAINED VARIOUS MESSAGES OF CONGRATULATIONS TO CARBALLO ON THE OCCASION OF THE ANNIVERSARY SUPPOSEDLY FROM THE INDEPENDENT DAILY LA PRENSA AND OTHER NICARAGUAN FIRMS AND FROM THE SPANISH AND U.S. AMBASSADORS.
3. (U) THE ISSUE PROVOKED A RAPID AND HARSH RESPONSE FROM THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS AND MANY OFFENDED NICARAGUANS. IN THE EVENING OF AUGUST 19, THE CENSORSHIP OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR ISSUED A DECREE STATING:
--THE AUGUST 19 EDITION HAD BEEN ISSUED WITHOUT THE APPROVAL OF THE CENSORS;
--THE CENSORSHIP OFFICE DID NOT SHARE RESPONSIBILITY FOR

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THE CONTENTS; AND

--THE PUBLICATION VIOLATED THE LAWS THAT PROHIBIT INSULTING THE DIGNITY OF INDIVIDUALS.

THE DECREE ORDERED "LA SEMANA COMICA" CLOSED FOR ONE MONTH.

4. (U) THE OFFENDED MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS WERE NOT ASSUAAGED BY THE DECREE AND PROTESTED TO THE GRN. THE SPANISH AMBASSADOR REGISTERED AN OFFICIAL COMPLAINT WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, NOTING HOW HIS NAME AND PICTURE AND EVEN THE OFFICIAL SPANISH SEAL HAD BEEN USED IN THE ATTACK ON CARBALLO. THE PAPAL NUNCIO LODGED A SIMILAR PROTEST NOTE WHICH STRESSED THAT "LA SEMANA COMICA'S" ATTACKS OFFENDED NOT JUST THE ONE PRIEST BUT ALL PRIESTS AND NUNS EVERYWHERE AND EVEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ITSELF. THE NUNCIO'S NOTE ADDED THAT CATHOLICS WERE CONFUSED AND OFFENDED THAT A REGIME WHICH EXERCISED SUCH STRICT CONTROL OVER THE PRESS COULD HAVE ALLOWED SUCH CALUMNIES TO BE PRINTED AND THEN AFTER THE HARM HAD BEEN DONE, DISCLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ACT. AMBASSADOR QUANTON, A REGULAR TARGET OF "LA SEMANA COMICA," ORALLY PROTESTED TO AN OFFICIAL OF THE FSLN'S INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS DEPARTMENT (DRI).

5. (U) THE SPANISH PROTEST NOTE WAS PRINTED IN LA PRENSA, BUT THE NUNCIO'S NOTE WAS CENSORED. WHILE ESCORTING CODEL SPECTER TO LA PRENSA ON AUGUST 24, PAO MET PABLO ANTONIO CHAMORRO, JAIME CHAMORRO AND CARLOS HOLLMAN (PRACTICALLY THE ENTIRE EDITORIAL BOARD) WHO PRESENTED HIM A COPY OF A LETTER FROM THEM TO THE PAPAL NUNCIO ANNOUNCING THAT LA PRENSA OF AUGUST 23 HAD NOT BEEN ISSUED BECAUSE THE NUNCIO'S PROTEST HAD BEEN CENSORED. P.J. CHAMORRO TOLD THE SENATOR THAT THIS WAS THE ELEVENTH TIME THAT LA PRENSA HAD FAILED TO PUBLISH BECAUSE OF CENSORSHIP SINCE MARCH 1982.

6. (U) AS INDICATED IN MANAGUA 3739, INTERIOR MINISTER TOMAS BORGE TOLD SENATOR SPECTER AND THE AMBASSADOR THAT THE NUNCIO'S PROTEST HAD BEEN CENSORED BECAUSE, IN THE GRN'S JUDGEMENT, IT WAS IMPROPER FOR A DIPLOMAT TO SEND A PRIVATE COMMUNICATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT TO THE PRESS.

7. (LOU) COMMENT: ONCE AGAIN, THE GRN HAS SHOWN ITS COMPLETE LACK OF SENSITIVITY TO CATHOLIC SENSIBILITIES. AS IN PAST INCIDENTS, AN EFFORT HAS BEEN MADE TO REDUCE THE IMPACT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S MISTAKE, BUT THE SCANDAL WILL REMAIN IN PEOPLE'S CONSCIOUSNESS AS YET ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE HOSTILITY OF THE SANDINISTAS TO THE CHURCH HIERARCHY.

QUANTON

END OF MESSAGE

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